



NEWSFILE

271

OFFICE FORMATS
OPENED UP

272

OS X FOR INTEL
CRACKED AGAIN

273

\$100 LAPTOP FOR
POOR CHILDREN

274

HOW TO DITCH
MICROSOFT

Sony resorts to 'spyware' to enforce digital rights

Music giant Sony BMG is being sued by enraged music fans, the Texas Attorney General, Greg Abbott and the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) for including digital rights software on 24 million of its CDs. The new copy protection measure secretly installs software on PCs, making them and corporate networks vulnerable to attack from viruses and other malware.

In an ultra-aggressive move to stop people copying CDs created by some of its recording artists, Sony has included software that covertly installs itself on Windows PCs at the system level, and is nearly impossible to detect and remove. Known by security experts as a 'rootkit', the software uses technology similar to that employed by virus and Trojan writers to infect PCs. Worse still, Sony's technology actually makes infected PCs more open to attack from viruses and worms.

Consumers who have tried to remove the Sony technology, known as XCP, reported that it often stopped their CD drives working and even damaged their PCs. Worse still for Sony BMG, a patch that it released to remove the most dangerous parts of the

rootkit was found by computer security company ISS to create new security flaws. A PC that has been patched is vulnerable to malicious websites that are programmed to install software secretly on visiting PCs. Such software could be anything from spyware to key-logging programs and remote control backdoors.

"Sony has engaged in a technological version of cloak and dagger deceit against consumers by hiding secret files on their computers," said the EFF's Abbott. "Consumers who purchased a Sony CD thought they were buying music. Instead, they received spyware that can damage a computer, subject it to viruses and expose the consumer to possible identity crime."

Abbott is asking for a penalty of \$100,000 (around £58,000) for each CD that is proved to have violated Texas's anti-spyware laws, as well as his costs. If Sony loses, it faces a potentially



enormous legal bill. It is estimated that Sony's dangerous anti-piracy software is installed on over half a million computer networks worldwide.

Sony BMG has agreed to exchange XCP-afflicted CDs for discs that come without the technology. The firm has published a list of records that include the XCP software at <http://cp.sonybm.com/xcp>.

Autumn launch for Windows Vista

Microsoft will ship Vista, the first major upgrade to Windows for five years, by late September or early October 2006, rather than December as most industry observers had predicted.

After several years of missed deadlines, coupled with the humiliation of having to jettison key features such as a new file system that promised greatly improved search facilities, the company was understandably shy about naming a precise date for the final release. Microsoft would commit only to shipping the long-overdue rewrite of Windows some time in the second half of 2006. This was widely interpreted as implying a December launch,

but a leaked internal Microsoft blog suggests that Vista's code will be completed by 31st August.

"If you want my personal accountability, I will not take a bonus if we don't ship Vista with high-quality and the soul intact by August 31st, 2006," wrote Chris Jones, Microsoft Vice President of Windows core operating systems development, in a company blog.

Jones was referring to the date by which Microsoft programmers expect to sign off Vista. So shrink-wrapped copies of Vista will not appear until several weeks later, suggesting a late September or early October release. The timing would also enable

PC vendors to load PCs with Windows Vista in time for the busy Christmas season.

According to *BusinessWeek*, which obtained a copy of Jones' blog, he was replying to a complaint from another Microsoft employee about "low morale" in the company, resulting from a series of poor management decisions. Microsoft's sales have stagnated, along with the company's share price, in the past few years.

The five-year period stretching from the 2001 launch of Windows XP to the 2006 launch of Vista is the longest gap between major operating system upgrades from Microsoft.



Microsoft to open Office file formats

Microsoft says it is making Office's file formats open for anyone to use. It has submitted its Office 12 Open XML file format to Ecma International, a Geneva-based standards body, to make it an open standard.

On the face of it, the move is a remarkable concession. Microsoft has used its ownership of Office file formats to retain tight control over one of its most profitable businesses.

However, the company has met increasing resistance from government and corporate customers who don't want to store their information in a format controlled by a single company. Microsoft acknowledged that the EU and the US state of Massachusetts had prompted it to open up Office.

"We recognise that many customers are interested in long-term preservation and archiving of their documents," said Steven Sinofsky, Microsoft Senior Vice President in charge of Office. "They

see the data in their documents being closely intertwined with XML markup. They want to see us take an approach that is focused on their desire for stability, predictability and manageability over the long term."

In an open letter to Office developers and users, Sinofsky wrote: "We now see an opportunity... to standardise foundational technology in document formats. We think this step will help provide a significant new level of benefits to the industry and to customers." Microsoft named Apple and Intel as among the partners with whom it intends to set up a committee to oversee the future of the Office 12 XML format.

Microsoft made its Office 2003 XML Reference Schemas available in 2003 under a royalty-free licence to third parties. Open-source advocates dismissed the move as an empty gesture. According to Free Software Foundation president Richard Stallman, Microsoft's move was disingenuous. "It's designed to

prohibit free software," he said. "It only applies to code which implements Microsoft's formats, and forbids modification, which is one of the key freedoms in free software."

Now, Microsoft appears to be making further concessions. "You are free to use our formats as much as you want and you don't need to make any mention or reference to Microsoft," wrote Brian Jones, a Windows program manager, on his blog. "You can implement these formats so that you can both read and write the formats with your technology, code, solution and so on. In other words, we will not sue people for using the formats even if it is competitive software."

"If you want to build a solution that works with our formats, you're free to do so without worrying about patents or licences associated with our formats. [This] would obviously apply just as well to anyone who uses your solution or modifies it," he wrote.

iTunes dominates UK downloads

Apple's iTunes Music Store (iTMS) dominates the UK music downloads business with a 54 per cent market share, according to a survey conducted by researchers XTN Data.

Way behind in second place was Napster with a 10 per cent market share, followed by British company Wippit, with eight per cent, MyCokeMusic, with six per cent, and MSN, which had just five per cent. The results came from a survey of 1,000 UK consumers who buy music both on CD and through downloads.

The figures are impressive but way below the 80 per cent market share the Official Charts Company estimated for iTunes earlier in 2005. Whether the difference represents a precipitous 26 per cent decline in market share or a more realistic measure of iTunes' popularity in a competitive UK market is not clear.

According to the British music industry association the BPI, the UK market for downloads has expanded from 5.7 million in 2004 to over 20

million in 2005, and Apple's smaller market share is the inevitable consequence of more competitors joining the business.

If XTN's data is correct, iTunes' UK market share is still well behind the 75-80 per cent market share it has in the US. However, its market share is more than five times that of its nearest competitor, Napster, which continues to lose money.

The threat to Apple is more likely to come from record companies, who are unhappy with iTunes' single pricing model. They want the freedom to raise prices for more popular downloads.

In September Warner CEO Edgar Bronfman said: "There's no content in the world that doesn't have some price flexibility," he said. In November, EMI chairman Alan Levy revealed that the record companies are determined to free themselves from the iTunes uniform pricing model. "We are having discussions which make us believe it will happen

in the next 12 months. There is a common understanding that we will have to come to a variable pricing structure. The issue is when. There is a case for superstars to have a higher price. We would like to reduce pricing on new and developing artists and charge a premium for our superstars," he said.

Apple CEO Steve Jobs accused the record companies of pressing for a change in pricing structure as a way to raise prices, a move he called "greedy". Jobs warned that raising prices would stall the growth of the legal music downloads market, which accounts for around five per cent of global sales.

More than half those XTN surveyed complained about the high prices download services charge, and XTN warned that these disaffected consumers were likely to return to file-sharing networks.

"At the end of the day, we're still competing with free," said Dave Goldberg of Yahoo! Music Unlimited.

NEWS

BRIEF

■ XBOX 360 OWNERS REPORT FAULTS

Shortages of the new Microsoft Xbox 360 console have been reported across the US. The much-touted console launched with reports of near riots as US gamers struggled to get their hands on the new machine.

However, it has not been without its technical problems. A number of users have reported unexplained crashes, which do not appear to be related to any particular game. Microsoft says some problems are to be expected and that customers should phone the technical support lines. It promises to replace any faulty machines.

■ TV OVER INTERNET SET TO GROW

The market for television delivered over the internet will grow very quickly over the next few years, according to a new report. Screen Digest reports that IPTV will have 8.7 million viewers in 2009. Online viewers currently number around 658,000.

According to the report, the number of subscribers to European IPTV services increased by 66 per cent in the first six months of 2005.

A number of organisations in the UK are already testing IPTV services, including the BBC. BT hopes to offer movies and other content, such as sporting events, over its broadband services.

■ BBC TO SUBTITLE INTERNET TV

The BBC is to test a system for adding subtitles to online broadcasts. A five-week trial will run on Click Online, News 24's technology programme, and will use new software that accesses the subtitling files from the original TV broadcast.

Should the trial prove successful, the BBC anticipates making subtitles available for much of its streamed video content. Accessibility for the hearing- and sight-impaired is now a legal requirement for regular TV but not internet transmissions. However, the BBC's accessibility editor described it as an essential element of net broadcasting.



NEWS

BRIEF

■ DELL MOVES NEARER TO AMD

Dell's contract suppliers have started building PC equipment that's compatible with AMD processors, according to sources quoted by the *Economic Daily News*. Taiwanese supplier Foxconn Electronics is believed to be manufacturing servers using AMD chips, Asustek Computer is building AMD-based motherboards and Quanta Computer is designing AMD-based notebooks.

The news comes shortly after Dell began selling AMD processors, after 20 years as an Intel-only shop. Suppliers are building stock in preparation for an announcement from Dell regarding an imminent launch of AMD-based computers.

■ SCAMMER JAILED

A 23-year-old Cambridge man has been sentenced to six years for conning people out of £1.6m and making violent threats. Peter Francis-Macrae was found guilty at Peterborough Crown Court of fraudulent trading, concealing criminal property, threatening to destroy or damage property, blackmail and making death threats.

He is believed to have made more than £50,000 per week by offering to register .eu domains when he had no power to do so. Francis-Macrae has stashed as much as £1.1m of his ill-gotten gains, say investigators, and is refusing to say where.

He sent emails to companies offering to register .eu European domains, as well as mail shots to others claiming their domains were due to expire and demanding a renewal fee.

■ GOOGLE TURNS BLUE

Problems with the content filter on a Google service meant visitors were deluged with a slew of adult content. The newly launched Google Base service, which allows classified adverts and other content, had a faulty Safe Search filter. It failed to block the many thousands of pornographic items that had been uploaded to the service already, despite it being barely a week old at the time.

Microsoft looks into ad financing

Microsoft has responded to the growing interest in web services as an alternative to desktop applications by previewing two of its own: Windows Live and Office Live. The move is widely regarded as a response to similar offerings from rivals such as Google, Yahoo! and Salesforce.com.

The names of the two services are rather misleading, however, as neither is an online replacement for its similarly named desktop equivalent. Rather, they are intended to complement their namesakes.

Windows Live consists of Windows Live Mail, a "faster, safer and simpler" alternative to Hotmail; Windows Live Messenger, an instant messaging client that includes free IP-based telephony; Windows Live Safety Centre, a "website where users can scan for and remove viruses from their PC on demand"; Windows OneCare Live, a subscription service that includes anti-virus, firewall and disk backup and maintenance features; and Windows Live Favorites, which can

"access Microsoft Internet Explorer and MSN Explorer Favorites from any PC that's online".

Office Live is aimed at small businesses and Microsoft has started by previewing Office Live Basics. This "helps a small business establish an online internet presence, including a domain name, a website with 30MB of storage and five web email accounts at no charge through an advertising-supported model".

Office Live also provides a set of subscription-based services with more than 20 business applications "to help automate daily business tasks such as project management, customer management, expense reports, time and billing management and secure internal and external collaboration".

Microsoft's announcement may indicate a recognition that internet-based services are increasingly challenging traditional PC-based applications, but so far both services are essentially repackaged offerings from its existing MSN and SharePoint services.

However, a leaked Microsoft document obtained by CNET suggests the company is considering a much more significant move. "As web advertising grows and consumer revenues shrink, we need to consider creating ad-supported versions of our software," wrote three Microsoft employees in a presentation to senior management.

A Microsoft source confirmed the letter but played down its significance. "It is simply an exploration of different models of delivering software to customers. It is not policy, it is not a plan and no decisions have been made. It's just some thoughts from our research and business units," he told CNET.

Further leaked documents, written by Microsoft's chief technical officer Ray Ozzie and Bill Gates, revealed that the company is considering a move towards advertising-supported applications, particularly in the consumer market. "It's clear that if we fail to do so, our business as we know it is at risk," wrote Ozzie.

Hackers crack OS X for Intel again

Apple may find it impossible to prevent hackers circulating versions of PC-compatible Mac OS X, judging by its efforts to stop early developers' versions of the operating system leaking out.

Apple will launch the first x86-based Macs in 2006 in an all-out attempt to claw back the market share it lost to the PC standard during the 1990s. But by choosing to make Macs nearly identical to PCs, the company could find itself reliving IBM's experience in the 1980s, when the company lost control of the PC standard to companies that chose to build MS-DOS-based systems.

After widespread reports, and even videos, of hackers successfully running Mac OS X 10.4.1 on PCs and laptops from a range of vendors, Apple introduced a rights

management system called Trusted Platform Module (TPM) to stop later builds of the operating system being hacked. TPM is generally accepted to be nearly impossible to crack, but a Russian hacker known as Maxxuss posted a cracked version of Mac OS X 10.4.1, which includes many of the new features from Mac OS X 10.4.3. He also posted detailed instructions on how to install it on his website at <http://maxxuss.hotbox.ru>.

The OSx86 Project website, which documents efforts to hack Mac OS X for Intel, reported that "this package, dubbed a '10.4.1 Update', reportedly installs many of the 10.4.3 files including an updated Safari and Webkit, the x86 unibin of Flash, a QuickTime 7.0.4 patch and other speed enhancements. [At the time of writing] the 600MB torrent

was being actively seeded and had been posted to the usual suspects.

"Although it would seem that Apple has successfully locked down its newest builds, it has permitted the blending of versions to add new features. Apple has repeatedly stated that it will not update the developer editions of OSx86," commented the site. "Is this the mechanism that [the] hacking community will implement to get around this stance?"

Hacking Mac OS X has become so popular that there is an enormous list of non-Apple hardware that can run the operating system, available at <http://wiki.osx86project.org/wiki/index.php/hclpart>.

"While Apple has promised to lock its operating system to its hardware once it's released, one must wonder what method it will use and if it will be stronger than the current TPM restrictions," says the Hack In A Box website. "While TPM technology is virtually uncrackable, hackers have fooled the OS into thinking it doesn't need the TPM authentication," the writer added.



MIT's \$100 laptop for world's poor

A bold plan to make a super-cheap \$100 (around £58) notebook for children in developing countries took a step closer to realisation when MIT Media Lab chairman Nicholas Negroponte showed off a prototype at a UN summit on IT in Tunisia.

Negroponte, who is leading the One Laptop Per Child project, hopes to begin production of the laptop in March 2006 and ultimately to sell 150 million of them to countries such as Brazil, Egypt and Thailand, which have shown an early interest.

The PCs will be powered by a hand crank and come with WiFi. The emergence of what could become a new computing standard has attracted the attention of Microsoft and Apple. As the project advances from an idealistic dream to an actual product, the fact that he has chosen to adopt Linux and open-source software has not gone unnoticed.

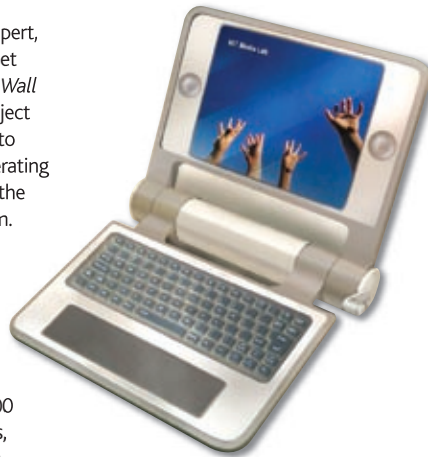
The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Apple boss Steve Jobs offered to make Mac OS X available as the operating system for free. This was a highly unusual gesture from a company that aggressively blocks all attempts to run Mac OS X on anything other than Apple hardware.

However, MIT rebuffed Apple's offer. "We declined because it's not

open source," said Seymour Papert, an MIT professor who helped set up the project. Papert told the *Wall Street Journal* that the MIT project leaders preferred the freedom to customise an open-source operating system such as Linux to meet the needs of the proposed platform. According to industry insiders, however, MIT was concerned that adopting a proprietary operating system could limit its room for manoeuvre in the future.

It is not clear that the \$100 laptop's low-end specifications, which include a 500MHz AMD processor, 1GB of flash memory and a hand crank to power it, would be able to run a demanding operating system such as OS X at more than a snail's pace. The project's political and financial background also made the adoption of a commercial operating system unlikely. The countries that are most likely to adopt the laptop, such as Brazil and China, are committed to open-source technology not controlled by US corporations. MIT has chosen Red Hat's distribution of Linux.

MIT, which gets some of its funding from Microsoft, acknowledged that it has had recent discussions with top brass at the



firm about the project's direction. "Their first reaction was to laugh at the idea, then the next reaction was kind of antagonistic. Recently, they're very friendly," said Papert.

The fact that MIT believes it will be able to oversee the production of a mass-market laptop with built-in WiFi and a colour screen for under \$100 could also send a strong message to PC vendors. Papert said that PC companies "have followed a policy of stuffing more and more into [a laptop], which most people don't really need and kept the price up. I think it's quite amazing that they managed to convince the world to accept that, but they did."

HP rethinks Blu-ray support

The battle between Blu-ray and HD-DVD took a dramatic turn when HP withdrew its sole support for Blu-ray and said it might offer PCs with HD-DVD drives instead.

HP joined Microsoft and Intel in their opposition to what it considers excessive copy protection in the Sony-designed Blu-ray technology. HP had been a staunch supporter of Blu-ray, which many industry analysts tip as the most likely winner in a standards battle reminiscent of the competition between VHS and Betamax in the home video market during the 1970s and 1980s.

Blu-ray has strong backing from most Hollywood studios and many large PC vendors, including Dell.

However, HP's concerns may give the Toshiba-designed alternative, HD-DVD, a fighting chance.

HP said it had asked the Blu-ray consortium to include support for two technologies called iHD and mandatory managed copy. Mandatory managed copy permits PC users to copy DVDs legally to their PCs so they can play them back. The iHD technology supports interactive features and is expected to be part of Windows Vista.

"Mandatory managed copy will be part of the Blu-ray format, but while HP's request [for interactivity] is being considered, at this point in time, the Blu-ray group is still proceeding down the path of Java,"

said Blu-ray spokesman Andy Parsons. "We are taking their request seriously but are not willing to delay the launch. I'm not saying we would not implement what they've requested, but it's not going to stop the format at this time. HP is still a valued member of the Blu-ray Disc Association and I expect to see them supporting Blu-ray in upcoming promotional events," he said.

Maureen Weber, general manager of personal storage in HP's personal systems group, said HP would probably support both formats. "If they are unable to incorporate technologies we think are critical for the PC architecture, we'll be more neutral," she said.

NEWS

BRIEF

MOVIE INDUSTRY WANTS TERROR RIGHTS

The film and music industries are demanding equal rights with anti-terrorist agencies. An industry grouping called the Creative and Media Business Alliance (CMBA) has written to European MEPs asking that powers given to law enforcement agencies to monitor private phone calls, emails and internet browsing be extended to record and movie industry investigators to help combat piracy and copyright theft.

In the letter to the MEPs, the music and movie companies said they "would appreciate your support in ensuring that this becomes an effective instrument in the fight against piracy".

JUDGE SPARES KAZAA

An Australian judge has extended the deadline by which Sharman Networks has to implement controls on the sharing of copyrighted material using its Kazaa software to February 2006.

Sharman was originally given just 10 days to put a filter in place that would enable the record industry to prevent the sharing of files relating to 3,000 specified keywords. Record companies will select and update the filter keywords.

The company said that the deadline had been extended to give it more time to carry out the necessary modifications to Kazaa.

"Kazaa has received its final warning. It is time for services like Kazaa to move on – to filter, go legal or make way for others who are trying to build a digital music business the correct and legal way," said John Kennedy, CEO of music industry body the IFPI.

BITTORRENT MAKES FRIENDS WITH MPAA

BitTorrent has joined with the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and agreed to help stem illegal downloads of movies and other digital content. As a result, BitTorrent will work to remove any copyright material that appears in its search engine.

The announcement was made by Bram Cohen, the founder and chief executive of BitTorrent, alongside Dan Glickman, chairman of the MPAA.



NEWS

BRIEF

HOLOGRAPHIC DISCS IN NEXT YEAR

The first holographic storage systems, which can store up to 300GB on a single disc, will be on sale at the end of 2006.

InPhase Technologies and Hitachi are jointly developing the technology, which uses laser light interference to store more than 60 times the contents of a DVD in a light-sensitive crystal material. Holographic discs will hold over six times the content of the next-generation DVD formats, Blu-ray and HD-DVD, and will be faster.

"Unlike other technologies, which record one data bit at a time, holography allows a million bits of data to be written and read in parallel with a single flash of light," Liz Murphy of InPhase Technologies told *NewScientist*. "This enables transfer rates significantly higher than current optical storage devices."

INTEL BRINGS MULTI-CORE CHIPS TO GAMERS

Intel is promoting dual-core Pentium-based systems as the ultimate machines for serious gamers, along with a range of new titles optimised for multi-core PCs. Dual-core processors are particularly suited for modern gaming applications, which is why the new generation of consoles, such as the Xbox 360 and the forthcoming PlayStation 3, have multi-core processors.

Intel claims that Black and White 2, Tony Hawk's American Wasteland, Age of Empires III and World of Warcraft have all been optimised for dual-core PCs.

UK'S 'MOST WANTED' LIST ONLINE

The launch of an FBI-style Most Wanted list on the Crimestoppers website proved so popular that access to the site was initially suspended due to excess traffic.

The site has photographs, CCTV footage and descriptions of wanted suspects, and provides the police with its first online source of anonymous tip-offs. *Crimewatch*'s Nick Ross described it as the "biggest advance since the 'wanted' poster".

The police can update and edit the content of the site at www.mostwanted-uk.org.

Microsoft users told to just say no

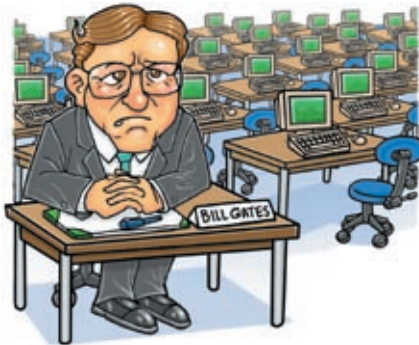
Following the example of self-help books that aim to help you give up smoking or drinking, technology author Tony Bove has written a book with a 12-step program to help computer users rid themselves of their dependency on Microsoft code.

The book, *Just Say No to Microsoft: How to Ditch Microsoft and Why it's Not as Hard as You Think*, starts with an excoriating account of how Microsoft achieved its monopoly position in the PC market, and then details all the idiocies and security problems associated with bloated Microsoft system software and applications.

In a chapter about Word, Bove recalls how dangerous it can be to rely on Microsoft software. "Word documents are notorious for containing tracked changes and revisions that could be embarrassing if discovered, and they are easy to discover."

"The British government of Tony Blair learned this lesson the hard way. In February 2003, Downing Street published an important dossier on Iraq's security and intelligence organisations – the same dossier cited by Secretary of State Colin Powell in his address to the

United Nations later that month. It was published as a Word document. A quick examination of hidden revision logs in the Word document revealed that much of the material in the dossier was actually plagiarised from a PhD student."



It's not just Word that poses security problems, according to Bove. "Did you know that all your Office documents – Word files, Excel spreadsheets, or PowerPoint slideshows – contain hidden information, including comments and revisions? If you don't know all the tricks for deleting this information, you are essentially compromising security every time you share an Office document."

The book explains how to minimise reliance on Microsoft by suggesting open-source and Apple alternatives, with step-by-step explanations of how to move over to them. He addresses the psychological hold Microsoft has over customers, which makes them reluctant to abandon ubiquitous applications such as Word for fear of being locked out of a Microsoft-dominated world. Step one is to "admit that you are powerless over your addiction, and your computer system and software have become unmanageable," writes Bove, in a tongue-in-cheek pastiche of a self-help manual.

He suggests the best way to be free of Microsoft software is to switch to a Mac, although many Mac users find themselves stuck with Office and even Internet Explorer, but both can be replaced. He also includes an extensive guide on how to strip a PC of Windows and Microsoft applications and replace them with Linux and open-source alternatives.

Bove is at pains to point out he produced his book with no Microsoft software. He used OpenOffice.org and Adobe FrameMaker. The 256-page book is available in the US for \$25 (around £15), and will be launched in the UK early next year.

Fight AIDS on your PC

A project to help find a cure for AIDS by using the idle processing power of hundreds of thousands of PCs around the world has been launched. Called FightAIDS@Home, the proposed grid of PCs, connected over the internet, is modelled on the Planetary Society's popular SETI@home, which harnesses the unused power of over 500,000 PCs worldwide to search radio signals for signs of extraterrestrial life.

Last year IBM created a virtual supercomputer, called the World Community Grid, which enables PC owners from around the world to contribute to scientific projects that might benefit humanity. FightAIDS@Home is the latest addition. IBM estimated that there are "more than 650 million PCs in use around the world, each a potential participant".

To join in, PC users can visit <http://fightaidsathome.scripps.edu> and download a 1.5MB application, which acts like a screensaver. When a PC has been idle for a few minutes a screensaver appears and the PC's processing cycles are harnessed to process raw project data. When you're ready to use your computer, the grid connection shuts itself off until the next time your computer is idle.

"We use software that automatically downloads small pieces of data and performs calculations that model how drugs interact with various HIV virus mutations," a Scripps spokesman explained. "After your computer processes the information, the results are sent back to the Scripps Research Institute, where they are analysed by the Scripps research

team. The process takes an enormous amount of computing time, which is why we at the Scripps Research Institute need you and your friends to participate in FightAIDS@Home. The idea is to take years off the research that would be required to find a cure for AIDS," he added.

The default setting for a new member on World Community Grid is to provide computing power to all the projects, but you can select to contribute only to FightAIDS@Home by editing your profile. Other projects include ClimatePrediction.net, which is working on predictions for the world's climate in the 21st century, and IBM's Smallpox Research Grid.

There is currently no support for PCs running Linux, although this is promised in the future.